

In support of Proceeding 99-325 before the FCC, the following is a statement from Hampton Roads Educational Telecommunications Association, Inc. ("HRETA"), a non-profit, educational FM licensee owned by the 14 K-12 public school systems in Southeast Virginia and holder of two Class B FM licenses:

Having participated in the AREPS meeting more than a year ago, we witnessed a strong show of support for the potential of supplemental audio channels on digital radio. At the final PRC in New Orleans last year, scores of people also showed their support for supplemental audio during HD Radio sessions.

HRETA strongly supports the approval of supplemental audio channels in digital radio broadcasting. As a provider of SCA coverage which performs a reader service for the blind in Southeast Virginia with several hundred members, we feel that supplemental audio services will be required simply to successfully transfer existing analog services to digital radio, saving them from technical issues associated with conversion, as well as explore new services which may provide funding support for public and community-based radio.

The chance for regulatory approval of supplementary (i.e. "Tomorrow Radio") audio may be crucial to financial survival for some stations, but it also provides the opportunity to develop new services not yet available to minorities and special interests which would otherwise have limited means to communicate through FM broadcast services.

The regulatory permission to use supplemental audio - especially with a degree of flexibility that allows broadcasters and receiver manufacturers to innovate and best serve the American people - will be a significant boost for deployment of digital radio.

(End of Comments)